

CAECILIA.

Monatsschrift für Katholische Kirchenmusik.

Entered at the Postoffice at St. Francis, Wis., at second-class rates.

XXXVII. Jahrg.

St. Francis, Wis., Dezember 1910.

No. 12.

MOTLEY MUSINGS.

(By A. L.)

¶ One by one they are passing to their reward, those grand old pioneers of the last 50 years of Catholic church music reform—few of them are left—and the last one so far to hear the final summons was Monsignore Dr. Francis Xavier Haberl, President General of the Consolidated Cecilian Societies of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, and director of the church music school of Ratisbon.

There are gentlemen in all parts of the world, to whom the news of this man's death comes as a distinct shock—we mean the former pupils of Haberl at the Kirchenmusikschule Regensburg.

Haberl dead and at rest—that is a thought to which they will find it difficult to reconcile themselves.

At rest he, who seemed the very embodiment of *action*?

At rest he, who moved to action hundreds of young men by stirring to their very depths the energies and forces that in them dormant lay and useless, too, perchance, but for his ever mighty impulse?

At rest this man, who by his publications and his pupils radiated action into all the world, action for God, action for Holy Church, action for Musica Sacra, his heart's one care, ideal, and vocation? Yes and alas! the picture is a real one though hard to look upon—Haberl at rest and Musica Sacra mourning at his bier!

He is gone and yet he lives! He needs not a biographer. The story of his life is written in his great achievements, in his works: they are his life, his everlasting monument.

Palestrina and Haberl—these men will live and live together, for they are immortalized—immortalized one by the other!

¶ For the benefit of some of our forgetful "latter day saint" church musicians, a little ante-Motu Proprio history is here submitted: In 1864—think of it, just 46 years ago!—Dr. Haberl published his *Magister Choralis*.

In 1874—just 36 years ago—Dr. Haberl founded his world-famous Kirchenmusikschule.

For 26 years Dr. Haberl was engaged in editing the last 24 large folio volumes of the Complete Edition of Palestrina's works, the material for which he had largely to collect himself amid difficulties that would have been simply insurmountable but for the dogged perseverance, natural resourcefulness, and bibliographical expertness of a Haberl. The valuable discoveries of Haberl enabled him to supply the deficiencies of the first 9 volumes that were gotten out by different editors. *Kirchenmusikalisches Jahrbuch 1908* contains an extensive and excellent appreciation from the pen of Dr. Widmann of this monumental achievement of Dr. Haberl.

Mementis juvat—a good motto for modern up-starts!

* * *

¶ Thanks to the marked and steady advance musical science has made in recent years, quite a number of chapters of musical history have had to be re-written, the reason being that a goodly portion of heretofore unquestioned "facts" had been exploded as moss-grown myths. A prolific source of such historical inaccuracies and misstatements was discovered in the religious bigotry consequent upon the so-called Protestant Reformation. Some Protestant historians and encyclopaedists, authors of supposedly standard works, were and are still being "shown up" as unfair in that they deny to Catholics the credit which rightfully belongs to them for achievements of noteworthy importance in the realm of music. We distinctly remember hearing Dr. Riemann—a non-Catholic, by the way—expressing himself quite vigorously on this very point in one of his lectures at the University of Leipsic. His remarks at that time concerned the shameful treatment accorded Johann Christian Bach, the only Catholic son of Joh. Seb. Bach, by some Protestant writers of musical history. These scribes considered the "apostasy" of the son of the foremost German Protestant Cantor a most unpardonable faux.

pas. Their frequent splenetic sallies against him serve to explain why, until recently, Johann Christian Bach has not received credit for his great merits in the development of some of the larger musical forms e. g. the sonata, whereby he became the forerunner of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. Nor is it difficult to understand, why, by the grace of these same scribes, Philip Emanuel Bach, a dutiful Protestant, has all along been on parade, decked with the plumage of his "apostate" brother.

The above may serve as a helpful illustration of the following:

It has long been the proud boast of Protestant writers that Claude Goudimel (1520—1572), a supposed Protestant (Huguenot), was the founder of the Roman school of classical polyphony, because, while at Rome, he was the teacher of Palestrina. In this manner Protestantism has been trying to lay claim to one of the grandest chapters in the history of music, a specifically Catholic chapter at that.

Here, then, is another of those moss-grown myths, which has been unable to withstand the searchlight of modern critical science. M. Brenet dealt it a deathblow by showing conclusively that Goudimel never was in Rome. Previous to M. Brenet's final solution of the question, Dr. Riemann had found it strange that Goudimel's presence in Rome was not chronicled by any Italian writer—an extraordinary omission, indeed, if Goudimel really was the teacher of the great Palestrina.

But even though it were true that Goudimel was Palestrina's teacher, it is well to remember, that the other phase of the question, viz: Goudimel's Protestantism, is far from being an historically proven fact.

Goudimel, it is true, set some psalms to four part music, using a French translation made by a Huguenot named Clement Marot. Marot had translated a good portion of the psalms before he apostatized and became a Huguenot. His translations were in use and very popular among Catholics as well as Huguenots. In a foreword to his psalm music Goudimel expressly states that his object was not to have his music performed in church but rather in the homes of the people. There is, then, little positive justification for the conclusion that Goudimel meant to supply the Huguenots with four part church music. But even if he did, this would not necessarily prove him a Huguenot, anymore than the composition of a complete German Evangelical church service proves Max Reger of our day a professed Protestant.

The strongest proof of Goudimel's Protestantism, however, was seen in the fact, that he died in the massacre of St. Bartholomew's night at Lyons 1572. Now, **not all** who fell in that massacre were Huguenots: people were killed on that night **as** Huguenots who were **not** Huguenots. Rascality seems to have been rife in more ways than one. In anticipation of what was to happen, people seem to have denounced their non-Huguenot enemies as Huguenots and to have had their names placed on the proscription list along with the Huguenots who were singled out for slaughter. Goudimel, it appears, was a victim of just such trickery. He had enemies who were exceedingly envious of his fame and achievements. This is exactly the view taken by the Protestant Martyrology in regard to Goudimel's death ("mais les ennemis de la gloire de Dieu et quelques méchants envieux de l'honneur, que ce personnage avait acquis, ont privé d'un tel bien ceux qui aiment une musique chrétienne." — Martyrol, liv. x fol. 772.)

* * *

¶ As a concluding word it may not be amiss to express the hope, that our Catholic musicians will soon begin to take a more active interest in the progress and results of modern critical musical science. It is certainly not to their credit if they continue to swallow down hook-line-sinker-and-all and without wincing all that is offered them in so-called popular histories of music, where, not infrequently, a brazen anti-Catholic bias reigns supreme.

♦ ♦ ♦

Development of Boys' and Men's Choirs.

(Continued.)

But the very quality which gives her supremacy in such music, makes her voice the less perfect instrument in purely sacred music. The deep spirituality of plain chant, and the mystical character of the polyphony of the 15th, 16th and early 17th centuries, seemed to demand the impersonal qualities and the mysterious intimations of boys voices. In our day this need is abundantly proven. Take, for instance, the contrapuntal Masses and Motets with the Palestrinesque school of composition; these cannot be performed with the same religious effect by women as by boys. The relative ineffectiveness of music written in this style sung by any of the great choral societies of men and women, no matter how perfect their technique may be, when contrasted with the performance of a perfectly trained chorus of boys and men, like the

choir of the Catholic Cathedral of Westminster, England, is unmistakably evident.

Whatever be the explanation, the deepest message of sacred music seems to come to the souls through the trained voices of the boys.

Here is another significant fact: in those churches of the United States, where choirs of boys and men furnish the music for the liturgical services, the attendance at High Mass and Vespers is noticeably larger than at other churches. In most of our churches only a meager handful of worshipers attends the solemn celebration of the Eucharistic mysteries, and the office of Vespers has become generally so unpopular that in many churches it is never sung save perhaps on Christmas and Easterday. If you will pardon the personal allusion, I should like to say that I have made a thorough investigation of these conditions throughout the United States, and I have found that boys' choirs (you understand that I mean well trained choirs) are an immense help to religion, and that the seating capacity of the churches where they sing are filled to their capacity even on the ordinary Sundays of the year. Not only are the always reliable female devotees in evidence at these services, the men, too, become interested, and instead of remaining satisfied with the shortest service which will fulfil the obligation of hearing Mass, encouraging numbers of men assist at High Mass, and return in the afternoon or evening to Vespers and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Worldlings, clubmen, non-Catholics and even atheists have succumbed to the spiritual attractiveness of these services. The music of the church is endowed with almost divine powers of appeal, and many a soul, to my own knowledge, has found in it an avenue of God's grace.

It is scarcely necessary to amplify this subject further. No one who has been privileged to hear the singing of trained choirs of boys and men will challenge the fitness of these choirs to sing the music of the Church. The master compositions of the world revealed their heavenly beauties through the voices of the boys, and if there is to be any real progress in the art of ecclesiastical music in this country, the starting point of the reform must be first in extending the appreciation of boys as the instrument of expression, and then in working out a scheme by which the proper methods of procedure may be extended to the musicians upon whom the fate of the boys' choirs movement practically depends.

2. Is It Possible to Maintain Artistic Choirs of Boys and Men in Churches on the American Continent?

Clergy and musicians generally here are of the opinion that conditions are not favorable for the best development of such choirs. The success of the great choirs of Europe and America is usually ascribed to an uncommon supply of beautiful voices, and to extraordinary financial resources. I am personally acquainted with most of the successful choir masters here, and I cannot call to mind one who commands better talent or greater resources than are found in the average parish of our cities and large towns.

In the average city parish there are plenty of boys who are possible choristers, and enough suitable and willing men to furnish an adequate section of tenors and basses. The beautiful voices heard in some of our greater choirs are the product of assiduous training, and in the majority of cases were of but average quality when accepted. Choir boys are made, not born. This is an axiom among choirmasters. The rough and ready boy, the nervous, noisy rascal, whose chief talent seems to be in creating mischief, the always-in-the-way lad, whose only apparent excuse for living is the fact that God created him, and that some day in the remote future he may become a useful man, these are the types of boys that even the most successful choir master has to educate into the choristers whom so many think are young cherubs loaned by a special arrangement with heaven to chosen choirs.

At least ninety per cent of the boys from the ages of nine to fifteen are possible choristers. Defective ears, laryngeal troubles and other things which are obstacles to musical development are the exception and not the rule.

Large choirs are unnecessary. It is a mistake to think otherwise. There are only a few churches on this continent where a choir of twenty trebles and twenty choristers, divided properly on the three lower parts, would prove inadequate. The greatest choirs of England and the Continent are relatively small organizations.

Even Mr. Richard Terry's famous choirs at the vast cathedral of Westminster owns to a personnel of only twenty-five trebles and a dozen adult singers. And yet in this immense edifice such a small chorus is sufficient to interpret with splendid effect not only the neumes of the plain chant but also the trying composition of the medieval masters.

The carrying power of a trained voice is very much greater than that of the un-

trained voice. Just as perfect acoustics in a large hall or theater make audible the faintest sounds, so a well cultivated tone-quality invests a voice with an elasticity and carrying power which give to its most delicate nuances a clarity that is remarkable.

At times musicians object to my contentions on the ground that all my experience has been with great city parishes of unusual equipment. I should like to say that while I have been engaged during the greater part of my active musical career in city parishes, I have experimented even in country districts to discover the real value musically of ordinary every day boys. During the past season, I went at the request of a priest to a very small town in a farming district to gather the boys of his parish into a tentative choir. The very first examination revealed what I expected, namely sufficient material for a splendid choir.

And frequently during the last thirteen years I have been called upon to select the choristers for choirs in all types of parishes. I have yet to visit the parish (of course I exclude unusually poor parishes in districts where the people are scattered over many miles of country) that does not offer the raw material for a successful choir. Priests and musicians will find it if they search. The material is at hand; it awaits cultivation.

The objection that boys cannot be kept interested and in good discipline after the first novelty wears off is not substantial. Experience has disproven it thoroughly. If a high ideal of musicship is proposed to them and a sense of personal responsibility is inculcated early, there will be no difficulty in enlisting the enthusiastic co-operation of the lads.

(To be concluded.)

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